THE ROLE OF TOLERANCE IN INDIAN CULTURE – A STUDY

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TECHNICAL REPORT OF THE THESIS

PART-I

" The Role of Tolerance in Indian Culture- A Study"

Introduction

To tolerate is to bear with patience the existence of others. It is to put up with the views and actions of other people. It consists in permitting other persons to express their views freely and implement them into activity. Tolerance is essentially a state of mind. For these is the positive action of non- interference in activity of other persons. Toleration is not in that sense possible among birds and animals. Tolerance can be between one person and another person, as between husband and wife, mother and child among friends. It may be between one individual and group, group and another group, community and community, race and race class and class. There can be toleration in religion-oriented culture; at the same time it is possible for toleration to prevail in entirely secular culture. This shows that religion and culture is quire distinct.

Spirituality is the hall-mark of Indian culture. Since the beginning of Vedas the seers and Rishis had innovated the experiential and reflective method of gaining knowledge and establishment of way of life.

Nature bestowed upon them the qualities of inward development requisite for free thinking and righteous life. Samhita of which Rik is the foremost abounds is propounding the concept of infinity, self and vastness of universe. At the same time the method and cultivation of inner states of being were exercised and explored by them, which open the potentialities of intrinsic nature. It in the inward exploration and aspiration to materialize

the human power and ability reflecting the endeavour of seers which has been largely responsible for the foundation and unbroken continuity of Indian culture. Spirituality has played vital role in directing and diffusing the goals of Indian culture. There have been often testing and crucial periods of Indian culture and there were times when her vital force was almost exhausted and the foreign rule had almost threatened the survival. It was at such critical period that her spirituality has bridged the gap and saved the perennial values cherished in Indian culture.

Indian culture has recognized spirituality not only as the supreme occupation of man but also as his all-integrating occupation. Similarly the entire spectrum of Indian culture, its religion, ethics, philosophy, literature, art, architecture, dance, music, and even its polity and social and economic organization, all-these have been constantly influenced and moulded by the inspiring force of a multi-sided spirituality.

Tolerance in Indian culture has been interpreted as concept narrower than that of religious liberty because it's traditional, Hinduism, does not proselytise, which means that a religion, which does not proselytise cannot afford to be intolerant. But we have in history examples of persecution even by adherents of religions, which did not proselytise. To give only one-example Romans are known to have been followers of a traditional religion, which did not proselytise and yet they persecuted Christianity. Tolerance was known to Rome but only as an ethos of her culture, which was aggressive expansionism. She could not afford to impose her religion on the areas conquered by her and hence she had to be tolerant to Christianity, which invaded her own domain religiously. Roman religion could retain its separate existence only so long as its patron state was persecuting were stopped and the patronage withdrawn. Once patronized by the roman emperors,

Christianity itself became a persecuting religion besides being a proselytising one. Hinduism on the contrary, did not wage a boldly war against aggressive religious like Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Christianity, even thought the proselytising activities of Islam were accompanied with the extensive persecution of Hindus by many Muslim rulers. Not only that it endored the rule of the active and persecuting patrons of some of these religions, sometimes for centuries together, without enjoying the support of any political power and yet it saved itself from being wholly absorbed by any of them. This quality of persistence even outside the patronage of a political power is a sign of strength, not weakness which all the non-proselytising tribal, primitive or polytheistic religions of the world lacked. Separated from state patronage none of them could survive the persecuting and proselytising on slaught and hence Hinduism does not appear to be only one of them. Its unparalleled quality of tolerance is not therefore, a product of its weakness but an expression of its strength.

PART-II

Firstly, since the beginning of Indian culture various races which were originally called varnas (colours) have been absorbed and they have been integrated into Aryan fold, Shak, Huns, Greeks, Scythes, Assyrians, and Dravids have been assimilated into the ever-broadening structure of Aryan culture.

Secondly, Hindu religion in particular and Indian culture in general have been essentially dynamic, experiential, reflective and valuational with the result that they have permitted and encouraged multifaceted ways of devotion, worship approaches to the understanding of world and reality. Shyadvada of Jainism, Chatushkoti of Nagarjuna, doctrine of maya and ineffability of Sankaracharya. Integralism of Sri Aurobindo may be

cited as illustrations of conciliating means for comprehensive nature of world and reality. As in the case of conduct and behaviour madhyam marg laid down balanced path, in like manner shyadvada shows the conditional and probable character of judgment. Logical judgment has relative situation and contingent quality of happening from logical point of view negation and affirmation has provided for toleration of views and practices in social, political and religious life.

Thirdly, the concept of dharma has been intensive and all-embracing. According to the Vedic seers there is at the summit of consciousness a power of action which arranges forces and activities of the universe by an automatic harmony of relationships, movements and results. The right law of the automatic harmony is the RITA. The Rita itself is founded in the truth of the reality and of the universe (Satyam) and its field of action is the totality, which is the infinite vast (Brihat). It is by the discovery from the crookedness of ignorant action. Rita is indeed the right law of action but it issues from the vast consciousness of the truth and it is thus superior to any human standards of action or any laws of the individual and collective life. It is this idea of Rita which lie behind the governing ideas that determined the organization of the varied aspects of life. Fundamentally, it gave rise to the predominant tendency to place the law of the truth as sole law to which the individual and the collectivity are called upon to give their ultimate allegiance.

Thus there came about in Indian an organization of human life in which each individual and collectivity was given the freedom to develop in accordance with the law of the truth. Even the state law had to be in conformity with the law of truth. The state

authorities could legislate but the legislation itself had to be in accordance with the subservience to the law of the truth.

The aim of this research is to bring into force the significant role played by the spirit of tolerance for the spiritual formation of our Indian Culture. Also, we have to analysis the various perspectives of tolerance in order to show that every aspect of tolerance has played its part in the various dimensions of our Indian culture.